

Linda Clair
Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Centre, Australia – March 2020
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 3C – Monday afternoon discussion session

Linda: How are you N.?

Question: It's been a very interesting and strong retreat so far for me, Linda. The longer I seem to do the practice, the more chaotic the practice seems to be. My current struggle – if I could put a word on it – is my fear and pain. The longer I seem to do the practice, the more painful it becomes. There are exceptions to that. If I have a particularly long sit, the pain seems to morph into some other experience. But mostly it's just pain. I don't know whether I'm becoming more sensitive to pain or I'm doing something wrong in my practice.

Linda: No, I'd say you're not doing anything wrong. It's that thing that I was talking about of regarding pain as bad; there's something wrong. But it's different, as you know, in this situation.

So it's mainly when you're sitting that you feel that? Where are you feeling it?

Question: Yes, that pain arises when I sit, in my knees and in my bum. And at the beginning of the retreat in my neck which I've never had before. It seems to move around. But the big pain is in my lower areas where I have contact.

Linda: Hmm, and that's the grounding pain. So you're not doing anything wrong – definitely not. Just be with it – that's all you can do.

Question: Yes, I try and be with it and there seems to be something that stops me continuing to be with it. I pull the plug. I just chicken-out at some point. In my mind I have this thought that, "Well N., you wouldn't have done that."

Linda: What do you mean by that?

Question: (Long pause) Umm. On previous occasions I feel I had the conviction to go further.

Linda: Well, you get to certain stages where it's just too much. It's probably a different level – a deeper level of it. And there are times when you just can't do it. It doesn't mean that you're doing anything wrong.

So sometimes it's just more valuable to sit for half an hour with it and then get up rather than pushing yourself to sit more or for longer. So don't beat yourself about it. Definitely don't think that you're being a wimp. There are different levels of pain. I don't want to go on about the pain too much but it is a bit part of it.

There's also the thing of what you've just been through with all the bush fires which has probably opened up something in you and humbled you. You're probably still in a bit of shock from it as well. So I'd say, this retreat don't push yourself too much.

Question: Yes, the bush-fire thing really brought home my lack of invincibility.

Linda: Your vulnerability.

Question: My vulnerability, and the fact that I could die at any moment. What you said is true – I'm still in shock about that because it's one thing to understand it but to be confronted by it is whole other thing.

Linda: Yes, it's like this practice. You can talk about it and read the books but when you actually do it, it's a completely different thing. That has been a huge practice for you, the last few months. And yes, it's shown you that you're not invincible.

Question: So I intend to just keep on with the practice, what I'm doing.

Linda: Yes, just keep on doing what you're doing. And this retreat, don't push yourself too much. Especially if you're feeling that much pain, I'd say, just keep it pretty steady. Don't try and extend yourself and sit for too long this retreat because I feel like you've been through enough lately.

Question: It's been extremely valuable even though I know I've been through a lot. I feel it's been very valuable and I've realised things through this experience which I would probably never have seen. I never knew I had that much fear.

Linda: So just be a bit gentle with yourself, this one. Not that feeling pain is gentle but don't expect anything of yourself. Just be here.

Linda: Any questions?

Question: I have a practical question about fluttering. My eyes feel like they want to flutter. It's really become a bit of a distraction. The last couple of days I feel it's the most available that I've been in the practice, in the retreats. By that I mean that everything that's going on internally – like some sort of catastrophe or intensity – I can somehow stay with it more than in the past retreats. But I noticed yesterday and then again today my eyelids start up. It's very distracting. Should I open them and look at something or try to keep them shut? It's distracting in a way.

Linda: I don't know if I'd suggest maybe occasionally open them but something like that can quickly become a habit where your eyelids start fluttering and you open them up. So you could end up opening and closing them.

I'd say, try leaving it. Really don't see it as something wrong. Anything can become a distraction; it's really up to you. I can't remember – it's probably happened with me before. It's probably something that just happens sometimes. So don't attach any meaning to and try not to see it as a distraction – just see it as a sensation. So use it as an extra sensation to keep you in your body. You could try that.

I don't know if I'd try and get away from it and stop it because that will probably make it happen more frequently and give it energy. I'd say, try and sit with it in a fairly neutral way and see it as a sensation in your body and see what happens. It will probably come and go. But the less attention you give it, probably the faster it will go.

Question: I hadn't even considered it a sensation because I'm so used to intense sensation.

Linda: It is a sensation. So I wouldn't focus on it or put too much attention on it but it is a sensation – it's keeping you in your body. But then start to watch that reaction to that sensation where you feel it shouldn't be happening and it's a distraction whereas all it is is a sensation; something that's happening – a stage you're going through. It won't keep happening. It will come and go. Everything comes and goes.

Question: And even the chaotic thoughts, I don't feel interested in them anymore, not even to get away from shin pain. That used to be a bit of a break from burning areas. Now I can't be bothered with them. It's more that I'd rather get the soft belly and feel the in/out until I can get the counting. But it's interesting to see that at a certain point these really seductive patterns have run out of steam. I can't even conjure them up.

Linda: Eventually it will become harder to think about something than not think about it. It will actually be harder – you won't be able to visualise, you won't be able to think about something. I remember a stage I went through where if someone asked me a question and I had to dredge something up from my memory, it would hurt and feel quite painful in my head to do that. There was a great resistance to trying to dredge up, usually an unnecessary, memory.

Question: There's a lot of people here and yet it feels so intimate. I can't imagine that we're fifty-odd people. It feels like such a small nucleus.

Linda: So it's really good that you're not so interested in the thoughts but the thoughts will become more subtle, for example, the reaction to the fluttering eyelids. It's a way of getting you to react and start thinking about it. So you have to really start to see all the subtle ways of thinking that you don't even see as thinking but they are thinking. Any sort of reaction like that is a thought and it can even spiral into a train of thought. (Long pause)

So you need to be prepared to do anything to be here – to prefer to be here more than anything else – however uncomfortable or painful it is. And that's what starts to happen when you see clearly what this thinking process is, what it involves and how ridiculous it is. All we're doing with thinking is trying to feel secure about our own death. We think we can delay our death by thinking about something else. That's what it comes down to because death is the ultimate unknown. None of us know really what death of the body entails because we're all still here in our body.

So the fear of death of the body is the motivator for thinking. That's why people think. But when you're faced with death you don't think – you're really here. And that's what the fear is – when you're really here, you're going to die. You can't really put anything off by thinking about it, pretending it doesn't happen, it's not happening. When you're dying you can't pretend – I suppose you could try and pretend it's not happening but it's actually happening.

Question: On what you said then, are you saying that the more you see the thinking process, the more you decide to be here no matter what is happening now?

Linda: Yes. The unknown or now – being here – becomes more and more attractive. And you don't even know what's attractive about it, you can't put your finger on it. But you do feel more alive. Even if you're in pain you feel much more alive than when you're lost in thought. When you're lost in thought it's like this second-hand experience. It's like an anaesthetic really, you're not really here. And it starts to become less and less attractive when you start to realise what it involves. And you can only realise what it involves by experiencing being here more – the clarity and the intensity. It's more the intensity of being here because being here is very, very intense. Thinking is like this day-dreaming, half-asleep sort of thing. You revert back to it because it's the default position, and when

you're tired you go back to it. But more and more, and as you get more energy, you're able to stay here for longer periods.

Question: Okay. I never thought of it that way before.

Linda: You never thought of it. (Laughing)

Question: Being here becomes so much more attractive no matter what the experience, compared to being lost in a thought.

Linda: Yes. And it doesn't mean you feel happy or pleasant or anything. You start to see that thinking – in a way, but not always of course – it's sort of comfortable because it's the known.

It's all about the known. You can't have a thought about something you haven't experienced. It's all to do with your own personal experience. So it's all the known – something that's already happened. But really being here, you don't know what's happening. With the layer of thinking – trying to analyse what's happening – there's always this delay. You're never actually here because when you think, it's relative – it's all relative. There's a subject and an object. But when that's not happening, everything is direct and spontaneous; there's not that delay anymore. It speeds up and it has to speed up – it's much, much faster because thinking is all time based.

So there's the subject and the object, and the distance between them becomes less and less until there's just now. Where there's no time there's no beginning, no end. It's impossible to understand with the mind because the mind is all about time and past/future, all that sort of stuff.

Question: I definitely feel like I've become less interested in understanding it with my mind. I feel like the more intense sittings reach into that more, like it's higher somehow. The mind is less involved.

Linda: Yes. And that's where having that pain or discomfort is really valuable because it is speeding you up. The mind will try to get involved but it can't really. It's something beyond its understanding. Looking at it rationally, why would you sit here in pain? You tell your friends and they just think you're crazy. And if your mind gets hold of you and you look at it, you go, "This is crazy. Why am I doing this?"

But it's the mind that's crazy. So everyone here is actually becoming more sane – not more crazy. But if you do tell people what you're doing here, they usually think you're pretty crazy for doing it. Why would you want to feel discomfort and pain, and sit for a week with no talking?

But in the end, for me, I would have done anything. I was so sick of my mind, so sick of me.

How are you P.? Are you okay?

Question: I'm really pushing myself. I just want to be here. You spoke about peace – that it's something physical that you felt. I feel my intention is making my whole body, one sensation. I just want to be here. I think I was very fast; with my thoughts and thinking, there were just a few words or mid-sentence and I was coming back.

Linda: So the thoughts were coming quickly; there'd just be a few words and then you'd come back?

Question: Yes because I feel more and more – since I spoke to you about the movement away from here – that my intention to just be here and catch the movement, feeling it physically and inside; feeling the movement of getting into a story. I'm just really here. But I slowed down a bit because you said to watch the emotional reaction and come back. I felt for some of my thoughts there was hardly any emotional reaction; it felt clean – not stress in my chest. So pushing myself and setting my intention very strong because I'm sick of myself. I know that with this I will lose my identity that I think that I am.

Linda: Yes, that goes, and everything changes.

The thing that a lot of people want is to keep their identity but be enlightened but that's impossible. (Laughter) So you have to be prepared to give that up.

It's not that you won't still be P. but you'll go back to like when you were a baby and P. had her own pure nature that was a bit different to the other babies. That's what you go back to – your pure nature. You'll still have your tendencies and things but you won't identify with your past.

When the thoughts come very quickly, people can tend to think that they're not doing it properly and **that it's bad** and the mind is chaotic. But it really means that you're not getting into one long train of thought – you're getting off before it starts to progress. And as it starts to progress into a deep thought, that's when you start to become emotional. But if you can catch that movement before it gets to that point – but without repressing it – seeing the movement and feeling it – and then come back.

It's very tiring doing that during a retreat; during a sitting or a whole day. But it's a really good way of speeding up. You have one thought and then another one and it can seem like it's going on continuously. But if you're breaking it, you're going, boom, boom, boom. So it's a great way of weakening the mind. You're not giving it a chance to take hold of you. So keep doing that.

Question: Everything I feel is an incentive now. Everything is just miserable: thinking, all the gaps that the mind gets through, the songs playing in my head. Pain is more preferable.

Linda: Pain has to be more preferable than that. That's why you put up with it, because you'll put up with anything rather than that.

Question: I want to ask about the degrees of thinking. I feel my mind and body are more separate. Thinking might just go on a loop and I can see it but I am here still because I can feel my whole body. I want to understand the different degrees there are because I feel I'm still here even if the thinking is going on. What is that?

Linda: I'm not exactly sure what you're asking. Can you be more specific?

Question: I'm still in my body. The whole thing is vibrating or there is a buzz or pulsing. There is pain as well, and sounds. But there are thoughts, words. But I am still feeling it. I've heard you say that if you're completely here there's no thinking. But I feel it's both. I am here holding everything.

Linda: You're here to a degree but you're still not completely here. It might be only subtle but there's still a bit of thought there.

Don't see it as a bad thing though. Don't see the mind or thoughts or the ego as the enemy. Never see that as opposite things like, "That's bad. I have to get rid of that."

It does become more and more subtle like that but if you see it as a problem, that's what will happen. You need to see that it's a slight movement away but it doesn't mean that it's bad because if you judge it at all, it gives it a bit more strength. Like I was saying to R. it becomes more and more subtle. Even when you see a tiny reaction, come back.

Don't question things like that because that will become a story as well. Just see it; come back. You're doing exactly the right thing. I can see you look really good. So keep doing that. Keep using every moment you can during this retreat – sitting and not sitting – to really look.

Question: I think my intelligence has grown a tiny bit, (laughing) because I'm also realising when my body really needs a rest.

Linda: Yes, that's a really important thing. You need to rest. So in between sits and in the day, at lunch time, it's really good to have a rest because otherwise you're just going to fall asleep; you won't survive the rest of the day. So make sure you have enough rest. We have good food. We can sit down. It's a picnic; it's fine. Keep going.

Question: ... P.'s question is exactly my question so I'll ask it again even though you've answered it because... (Long pause) Sitting here in the tumult which doesn't upset me so much anymore; I don't feel like I'm going crazy because I'm sitting in a tumult. My mind is always describing to you or to God what's going on with me; it won't shut that up. But I know – there I said the word know – I am aware that I'm sitting here in the tumult and I'm thinking and describing my experience half the time, to God-knows-who, but quite some of me is here. I don't know what it is that's here but I'm not lost in the tumult.

Linda: It's not even so much that some of you is here, it's more that you're just not lost – there's less of you. It's not that more of you is here, it's just that there's less of you. I'm not sure what you're asking. "What's going on?" – is that what you're asking? It's a bit similar to P.'s question.

Question: It is similar. I guess I'm asking, what is here? Here is where my body is?

Linda: Why do you want to know?

Question: I don't know! (Laughing) I want to know what's going on.

Linda: You don't need to know what's going on. Just keep going. Keep sitting.

You'll never know what's going on. You'll never find out what's going on. In the end, you realise everything. But you haven't got time to know what's going on when everything is happening so quickly.

If you start to complicate by trying to know what's going on it's going to pull you down into that thinking state. So you need, to a large degree, to trust – just trust. Trust your instincts. Just stay here. Don't try and know or understand. Like I said, you'll never understand. And I can't really describe it except to say there's less.

Just look at what's still resisting. Look at the resistance and come back to your body. The reason we use our body is because it's so solid. It's not real because of course one day it's going to go but it's much more real; you can touch your fingers. Your thoughts – you can't touch them – you start

looking for them and there's nothing there. It's just this mish-mash of stuff. And yet that's who we think we are. We think we are our thoughts, our past. That's what we identify with. It's crazy!

This is much more real; your body, your brain, intelligence. The mind is not the brain. It's infiltrated the brain and rewired it but it's not that physical intelligence in our body that runs our body. So trust. Trust your body. Trust your instincts.

But don't try and know what's happening. It's not going to help. Even if I describe it it's not going to help. It's a bit like N. talking about the bush fires – the theory is very different to the reality and it's not going to help you. If I describe this and that, when you're actually sitting there in pain, it's not going to help you one bit. All the theory in the world is useless. So trust your instincts. Trust whatever has brought you here which is your intelligence. Never trust your mind. And just give up trying to understand this whole thing because you'll never be able to do it. That's why the trust is so important.

But you still want to know! (Laughing)

Question: I feel like a maniac running around in the dark going, "Where's the light? Where's the light?" (Laughing)

Linda: Well, I'm your guide. So just use me as your guide. But I can't tell you where you're going. I can tell you where not to go but I can't tell you where you're going.